



Changes to gluten free prescribing - Your questions

Why have you stopped funding some gluten free foods?

The variety of gluten free (GF) food products in supermarkets has improved dramatically in recent years. However, some specialist gluten free products are more expensive than equivalent items which **do contain** gluten. Your NHS services can still prescribe staple gluten free foods, like bread and mixes. These are more expensive to buy so will help subsidise your gluten free diet.

Why are you prescribing only bread and mixes?

The decision is as a result of a national [consultation by the Department of Health and Social Care](#). This means other gluten free foods (e.g. pasta, pizza bases, cereals, grains, flour and biscuits etc.) will no longer be prescribed. The Department of Health and Social Care consultation also considered the option of banning the prescribing of all gluten free foods in primary care. If this option is considered for Buckinghamshire CCG a public consultation will be undertaken in the future.

Why are only some brands of bread and mixes included?

We need to make sure gluten free products available on prescription are cost effective for prescribing through the NHS. These products should give patients basic provisions to support their gluten free diet.

Will fresh bread be included?

Yes - many people prefer fresh bread and many gluten free suppliers have now made this cheaper. We advise people to freeze surplus quantities of GF bread as soon as they get it, as fresh GF bread deteriorates rapidly at room temperature.

Why can't I get my gluten free products from the supermarket on prescription?

Unfortunately NHS rules mean only pharmacies or dispensing doctors' practices can dispense NHS prescriptions.

Why are you no longer funding biscuits, cakes, etc.?

Biscuits and cakes are not considered part of a healthy diet. For the NHS or your GP to prescribe these would be at odds with national health messages. For more information and advice on healthy eating, contact your local pharmacy, surgery or go to www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/.

Why are you not funding pizza bases and pasta on NHS prescription anymore?

This decision was made after the national consultation. Foods that are naturally gluten free can be eaten instead of pasta, such as potatoes, rice or rice noodles. Gluten free pizza bases and pasta are available at a similar price to their equivalent gluten-containing products in supermarkets.

Cost of gluten free products to the NHS

Gluten free products cost more on prescription than they do in the supermarket. It is unclear why the NHS is charged so much for gluten free products. Some items cost the NHS more than double the supermarket price of similar items.

How many gluten free products can I get on prescription?

Eight units of GF products can be prescribed, per patient (adult or child), per month.

This could equate to eight loaves of bread (at 400g per loaf).

With mixes, one unit is equal to 250g of mix. This means that a 500g pack would be two units or a 1kg pack would be four units.

Patients can have different combinations of eight units – for instance, six loaves of bread (six units) and a 500g pack of mix (two units).

Are there no other ways in which the NHS could save money?

The NHS is always looking for ways to save money without impact on patient care. This means we look for different ways of doing things and every little saving helps.

This policy does not seek to penalise anyone living with coeliac disease. Instead, it aims to support people with the higher cost of maintaining a GF diet. Hopefully this will keep it in line with the average weekly food bill of the rest of the population.

Patients with coeliac disease are not being singled out. Other ranges of items that can be supplied by the NHS on prescription are also limited. For instance, over the counter items for minor conditions (e.g. sun creams, dandruff shampoo) synthetic wig (but not a real-hair wig), dentures, crowns and bridges (but not dental implants), basic spectacle frames (but not necessarily fashionable ones).

For more information please contact your local pharmacy or surgery

Surgery/pharmacy name	Address

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